

Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Mark McGowan

WAGES POLICY — POLICE

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition) [3.43 pm]: I move —

That this house expresses deep concern that the McGowan government is reneging on its election commitment to a 1.5 per cent pay rise for Western Australian police officers.

This is a very important issue. We recognise that periodically, and probably now, there is a need to tighten up wages policy. The opposition understands—and in fact had a long debate in the years leading up to the last election and during the election campaign itself—the difficult financial position faced by the state, the excessive levels of debt and the need to address issues of expenditure. We knew that and the then opposition knew that. It went into the election campaign with a set of promises to reduce debt, resolve the deficit over four years, and to provide \$5 billion worth of new expenditure. It also communicated with all public servants, promising a 1.5 per cent pay rise. That contributed to its landslide win in the election. Around the time of the election, two major enterprise bargaining agreements were open for negotiation—one for police, and one for firefighters. Both had issued logs of claims, and both were involved in live negotiations at that time. Both would have read the 1.5 per cent promise given by the opposition. The Labor Party won in a landslide and began to negotiate with the WA Police Union and the United Firefighters Union of WA. It met with the police union repeatedly in April and May to negotiate the logs of claim that the police union lodged with the government on 9 March. The government had it in its hands. To say that it was only due in June is ridiculous. The union, of course, as unions often do, asked for the sun and the moon; I think it asked for about 6.5 per cent over two years. We are not supporting that, of course. The union has made it clear repeatedly to the government and the public on radio and elsewhere that it is more than willing to accept what was offered to it prior to the election and after the election—that is, a 1.5 per cent raise. Bureaucrats from the industrial relations department of the Department of Commerce met with the police union on 4 May and verbally offered it 1.5 per cent. There was an offer and there was an acceptance; it was a deal done. The firefighters were going through the same process at about the same time. Before the election they were offered 1.5 per cent and after the election—before the wages policy came in—they were offered 1.5 per cent. Later, on around 16 May, the Premier reneged on the deal with the police union. He decided that the offer that was made before the election and the offer made after the election of 1.5 per cent was no longer suitable for the police. He also decided at around the same time that it was suitable for the firefighters. Why?

I accept what the Premier said when he went out and addressed the police union today. All of us here work in the community and recognise the vital importance of the police and, for that matter, firefighters. They are our front line and protect us. All of us here know the valuable contribution of the police force and firefighters. Why discriminate? Why choose to give a 1.5 per cent raise to the firefighters' union—not to the police—and actually ratify the agreement with the firefighters after the announcement of the new wages policy? The wages policy was announced on about 12 or 16 May but the ratification of the agreement with the firefighters took place on 26 May—almost two weeks later. Why discriminate against the police union and for the firefighters? Numerous times during the last four years of the Barnett government we altered wages policy and ratcheted it down. Each time we announced a change we said that it would come into effect on a certain date in the future that varied. What we also did, as an act of fairness, was state that all enterprise bargaining agreements under negotiation or discussion at the time of the change in wages policy were grandfathered in to the old wages policy.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Very fair.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: That was fair. For all EBAs under negotiation, we followed through with the old wages policy. That cost us money and was difficult for me as the Treasurer to agree to but that was the issue; it was fair and open. Negotiations and discussions had been taking place and positions had been laid. That is what should have taken place here. Two major EBAs were open for negotiation at the time the government was considering revising its wages policy—the firefighters and the police. The police lodged their claims on 9 March and the government has reneged on them and not acted in a fair manner.

This is not just any government. This is a Labor government that prizes itself on looking after workers and representing unions. I have been informed that, as it so happens, the Western Australian Police Union of Workers is not affiliated with the Labor Party and the United Firefighters Union of WA is. Maybe that is the reason for the discrimination. I would like members opposite to explain that to me. Maybe the Minister for Emergency Services

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was more vociferous in arguing for the firefighters than the Minister for Police was for her people—the police. Simply, an offer was made before the election and after the election to the police, an acceptance was given, and the government reneged on it. The operation of procedural fairness should be that any enterprise bargaining agreement being negotiated at the time of the change in policies should have been grandfathered in. That is what we did. That is what a fair government would do. This government has failed and deserves the ire of the police.

MR K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [3.50 pm]: I wish to talk on this matter of public interest. I thoroughly enjoyed being a police officer for 34 years. It was good to see all the brothers out there today. Being a police officer is a very hard job. It does not discriminate by gender, age or race. Police officers attend jobs not knowing half of what is behind closed doors. They are given a job and they just go there. With many jobs in our community, people go to work and know exactly what they will be doing. People who work at Coles on a checkout just pick up the items, scan and bag them. Police are told: go to domestics. Like a lot of police officers, I hated going to domestics; I would rather go to something harder. We have no idea with domestics. We go there to help one side of a family involved in a domestic, and within seconds both sides turn on us. I was lucky enough not to receive serious injuries during my police career—that was not because I shirked anything; I think luck played a big part in it—but my heart goes out to all the officers who have received serious injuries in recent times. Being attacked by someone with a Samurai sword is just mind-boggling and terrible.

I will give members an example regarding wages. A young regional police officer comes home to his wife and three children. “Look, honey —

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: That is all right, Mr Speaker.

He comes home and says, “Look, honey, I’ve got a \$1 000 pay rise.” The wife says, “How good’s that?” The next minute, there is a knock at the door and the wife answers. The husband says, “Who was that?” She says, “It’s the evil landlord”, also known as the WA Labor government. The wife says, “Oh, look, we’ve just got a \$1 000 pay rise.” The evil landlord says, “That’s great. Now I’ve just put up the rent. I want \$1 500.” So the regional copper got \$1 000, and \$1 500 went out the back door. It is very disappointing. I was asked about this on radio about six weeks ago, and I said to ABC radio that I agreed with the 1.5 per cent increase. The ABC asked whether the government was not doing the right thing, and I said, “I can also see where the government is coming from.” However, the big issue I have is that it was a commitment. The former Liberal government promised 1.5 per cent, and Labor matched and committed to it during the pre-election period. It has now changed its mind.

During the election process the media kept asking me what I was promising for Kalgoorlie—what was I promising. Each time I said, “I’m not promising any monetary value whatsoever.” The now Labor government and the National Party promised tens of millions of dollars for the goldfields, and they were entitled to do so. The media kept saying, “What are you going to promise?” I said, “I will not promise. I will not commit any monetary value item unless I can deliver.” I did not start out as a young politician; I started out as a mature-age politician

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: That’s right.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I thank my suburban member there!

I am sticking to the game plan. I got elected without promising one cent. It is not something I am proud of; I would love to have promised monetary things for my electorate, but I promised it hard work and nonstop efforts to try to improve things for the goldfields and, yes, to work with whichever government was in power. I would like to get back to one thing: commitment. I firmly believe that if we promise something, our word is our bond. Your word is your honour. I believe that the state government must deliver 1.5 per cent or, if there is a trade-off and agreement with the WA Police Union, I am all for that. We need to change attitudes and perceptions of politicians. We should not promise things we cannot deliver. That is all I wish to say.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the National Party) [3.55 pm]: I rise today to support this motion and speak on behalf of the Nationals. Clearly, we were pleased to be invited today to the steps of Parliament House to address the men and women in blue who turned out to point out the completely unfair way that they are being treated by this state government. Its broken promises will have a real impact on these people who put their lives on the line to keep our communities safe. We stand in solidarity with their request to be treated fairly. As I pointed out at the rally, we think that what is taking place will make it incredibly difficult not only on an individual basis, but also for the government to attract and retain those police officers in the communities in regional Western Australia that we represent. It is difficult enough to do that already, although we had significant programs in place while we were in government to assist the police to do that. Making it more unattractive, punishing them and walking away from a commitment will make it more and more difficult to maintain those people in our communities. Quite often, the police service is the only essential service in some of our communities.

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The police are the only state government representative agency in these communities. They are a vital part of our regional communities.

I wish to take up some of the comments that the Premier made during question time and reflect on what this wages policy will deliver for the government. Everyone out there understood very clearly what we were saying. We are facing a \$42 billion debt and a \$520 million solution; taking away from those who can least afford it is not the way to go about it. The real question needs to be asked about why the Premier, the Treasurer and the ministers in this government are not going down every avenue to make sure that we do not have these types of confrontations and conversations with those who serve our communities. We do not think that this government is doing its job in that respect.

Either the government is scared of or captured by the big end of town. The government is not willing to break the promises that it made to Rio Tinto, BHP and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, but it is very happy to walk away from those who serve our communities and wear the blue uniform and put their lives in danger on our behalf. The question needs to be asked: what is preventing the government from doing everything it can to not break that promise to a group of individuals and people who serve our communities? We think there is a solution, and we support the anger that was palpable out there on the steps of Parliament House. They are angry and they are right to be angry because this government is not doing everything it can to make sure that that debt is reduced in a way that does not impact on families, households and police and public servants. There will only be more pain. The Labor Party came to government with its fingers crossed saying, "We will figure it out. We have no plan." The Liberal Party and the National Party had a plan to reduce that debt. It would never have got to \$42 billion in the out years. The Labor government does not and did not have a plan. It understood the finances of the state and it is now breaking promises so that it can deliver its election commitments. It is irresponsible when we are talking about people who serve our community.

We ask the Labor Party to sit down and have the hard conversation and to stop throwing back in our face that we want to rip up state agreements; that is not what we are saying. We are saying that the Labor Party needs to have the conversation; it needs to sit down and start negotiating, because there are avenues on the table that will allow it to significantly improve its bottom line and the finances of the state. Doing it by cutting savings is not the answer. The people of Western Australia will become more and more wise to this as the state budget is handed down and as more decisions, such as increasing electricity and power prices, become evident. That is what the people of Western Australia are going to see. This negotiation with the police is only the start. In addition to the fact that they have been promised something that they will now not receive, their households will be impacted by increased fees and charges, because this government is going to every corner of households that cannot afford it to pay for the promises it made during the election, knowing full well the situation with the state of the finances.

It is an absolutely outrageous situation to find ourselves in. The Nationals support the WA Police Union in its negotiations. It is wrong for the government to walk away from a promise that it made, especially when it will not walk away from promises made to the big end of town, which could very well afford to sit down and negotiate with the government on outdated state agreements and deliver an improvement to its bottom line. It is an absolute shame. The government should be ashamed when it has to front rallies, as we did today, and look at those people who put their lives on the line for us. I hope it feels ashamed. It is an absolute outrage.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations) [4.01 pm]: I expected the opposition to develop a case in this debate, but I suppose I have to respond on behalf of the government in the absence of an argument in favour of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Normally, what happens in a matter of public interest is that the opposition outlines why the house should support the proposed motion, but unfortunately, for some reason today, the opposition has decided not to make a case for why the house should endorse the contents of this matter of public interest. It is therefore very hard for me to speak, because no substance has been put before the house to deal with this issue. I am not quite sure what I should say because I have not been challenged in ask of anything. There has not been any critique and there has been no explanation of why the government's fiscal strategy is wrong. That is the fundamental issue here.

Mr D.C. Nalder: You walked away from a promise.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member for Bateman interjected and said that we are walking away from a promise. Only a couple of weeks ago, the member for Bateman came in here and asked us to break our promise about Roe 8. Apparently, only some promises are important.

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bateman!

Dr M.D. Nahan: You broke a whole range of promises. You broke the one on electricity prices.

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The SPEAKER: Members, this is not a question-and-answer session. You have had the opportunity to talk, and no-one else wanted to get up.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is fundamentally the problem with the opposition. Before the winter recess, the Leader of the Opposition said in this place that the government's wages policy was the right approach for the state of Western Australia, and I thanked him for doing so. I congratulated him in public with the media that, for once, he was doing the right thing by the taxpayers of this state and endorsing a sensible policy outcome that will save \$520 million over four years. Unfortunately, it took only the winter recess for the Leader of the Opposition to walk away from that.

Let me make it clear: police work is a tough job. I personally would not want to do it. I make that perfectly clear. I think police officers provide an excellent service to my community and to all Western Australians. That is why I do not understand why we are at this impasse. We have offered a 1.4 per cent increase to police constables, but the police union is saying that it wants 1.5 per cent. That is a \$1.36 difference. This dispute has stretched for weeks over \$1.36 for a police constable. I understand that more senior officers on hundreds of thousands of dollars will not get 1.4 per cent. But for those police on the front line, putting their lives on the line each day, the difference between what we have offered and the previous wages policy is small. Of course, for the very senior officers in the offices doing important work on behalf of the community, there is a larger difference. I attended the police rally today and I can understand why those police officers were there. I imagine that if the weather had not been poor more of them would have been there; I have no question about that at all. I understand that the WA Police Union did not bring a bus from Fremantle or Cannington to the rally. I am sure that if the weather had been better it would have done that—no question. I do not begrudge that the police were paid to attend that rally; there is nothing wrong with that at all. When I was a union official, I had people paid to attend rallies. That is not a problem. That is the sort of thing that employers and unions agree on all the time. Nothing of that is at all unusual. But it is \$1.36 for a first-year constable and that is the argument.

There are some misunderstandings, apparently from the opposition, about time lines. According to the Leader of the Opposition, on 3 May 2017, a deal was done by the police union for a 1.5 per cent wage rise. I find that unusual given that on 12 July 2017, the police union wrote to the Commissioner of Police asking for a 6.5 per cent wage rise plus a whole range of other things including the introduction of a 38-hour week, which is effectively a 5.6 per cent increase. I do not understand. If the deal was done on 3 May, why did the police union write to the Premier after that and complain that no formal offer had been made by the government? I am sure that there is some explanation for these things, and I can explain that. At no time, including today, has the WA Police Union accepted any wage offer from the government. Indeed, it did not, would not and will not accept the wages position of the former government of 1.5 per cent—never. I point out to members that today the WA Police Union is in dispute with the government—since October last year—about auxiliary police officers because it would not accept the 1.5 per cent wages offer. It has sought additional conditions for those officers. Of course, a union is perfectly entitled to ask for those, and I am not begrudging the union's desire to ask for anything; it has an absolute right to ask for whatever it wants. But the idea that on 3 May it was a deal done is a falsehood. I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition made that false claim, but it was false. It is untrue; it is not accurate; it is wrong. I am perfectly happy for negotiations to continue and I am sure that we could agree to a whole range of conditions, but unfortunately the position is that for four years we are asking all unions to accept \$1 000.

I want to return to the falsehood that has been promoted about the United Firefighters Union of WA. I will make a couple of points about that. Let me make it clear: the United Firefighters Union will be offered four years at \$1 000 at the expiry of its current agreement. That union thought the government was going to introduce a wage freeze because there was a lot of discussion in the media about wage freezes. At the first bargaining with the Department of Commerce, as it was, the union accepted the existing 1.5 per cent. The officials at the Department of Commerce, who of course had no idea that the government was considering matters in cabinet, said that if the union is accepting the government's wages offer, they will accept that deal.

They reported back to me as the minister. I was in a difficult position because, of course, I knew what was happening in cabinet but I was not able legally to tell anybody. That is how the United Firefighters Union of WA agreement was endorsed by me. At the time that the agreement was endorsed —

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: When did you endorse it?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have that date. I am happy to give it as other information; I do not have it on my notepad right here.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: When did you endorse it?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I will find out in a minute.

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Let me make it clear: that was prior to 12 May, when we announced our position. The UFU did not ask for any conditions and it accepted the 1.5 per cent increase. At no time has the WA Police Union accepted the 1.5 per cent increase. If it did, it would accept our \$1 000 offer, which is 1.4 per cent for a first-year constable. This is not about the cash; this is about the conditions. The police union had a long list of conditions, which the former government would not have given them.

I was very interested in the question from the member for Hillarys regarding the 40-hour week. I will just make a point about the 40-hour week. The Liberal Party did not give the police union a 38-hour week in 2008. It did not give the police union a 38-hour week in 2009. It did not give the police union a 38-hour week in 2010, in 2011, in 2012, in 2013, in 2014, in 2015 or in 2016! Indeed, it did not even do it before the election was called in 2017. Not once did the Liberal Party care about giving police officers a 38-hour week. What a shock, because it was the Liberal Party that increased police officers' hours of work from the 38 hours they had worked from 1988 to 1996, when the Liberal Party increased their hours from 38 to 40 hours. Police officers currently work 40 hours a week because the Liberal Party increased their hours. What hypocrisy! Let us understand, in 2006 the police union received a 17 per cent increase —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: It was 1996.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, it was in 2006, when we were in government. And 5.6 per cent of that increase was to buy out the 40-hour week. Other unions, like the Civil Service Association and others, chose to return to a 38-hour week. The police union did not do that because it took it in cash. Now the police union is asking to keep the cash and get the hours back. No government is ever going to agree to that. We know that because the Liberal government never agreed to it. Let us not kid ourselves; we are perfectly happy—we will do it immediately—to give police a 38-hour week if it is done on the same basis as it was done for every other union that accepted the 38-hour week. I do not begrudge police getting a paid meal break. I think it is a good idea because it means that if something happens when they are eating a sandwich, they have to go on duty. It is an obvious arrangement. But the idea that taxpayers of this state should pay for the same hours twice, having paid for it as part of that deal in 2006 and now having to pay for it again, is not sustainable.

It is not a surprise that the Liberal Party came up with an unsustainable wages process. I remember the 2005 election campaign, when the then Labor government was in dispute with the Australian Nursing Federation, the member for Cottesloe, as Leader of the Opposition, went to them and said, "We'll give in." During the election campaign he said, "We'll give in." In 2008, when the Labor government was in dispute with the State School Teachers' Union of WA, again, the member for Cottesloe went to them and said, "Whatever the Labor government gives you, we'll give you \$300 million more." The 2013 election—nobody can tell us who authorised the nurses' wage rise that was again done in the election campaign. Let me make it clear, the reason the Leader of the Opposition was a failure as Treasurer is because he did not do his job; he did not restrain expenditure. It is a tough job—I have said this before—to look in the eye of a friend and say no.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: On the third call here the Leader of the Opposition should start to read what I said in *Hansard* instead of coming up with these stupid things he says all the time. They are stupid things that he says, and this is another one. Nobody in the Labor Party said to the former government that it should spend its way out of problems. We kept saying the opposite to the government. We said not to waste money on things that are not important, but to spend it on the things that are. That is the problem here.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: It is not important to pay the police officers?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If we had the capacity in government to pay more than we are, that is what we would do.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: You do; you just choose not to.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What does the member for Hillarys want us to cut?

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: Some of your unfunded promises.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Like which ones? Tell me which one. Which one would the member for Hillarys cut?

Mr P.A. Katsambanis interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair, please.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The problem here is that, again, the Liberal Party does not understand its own budget. In government it borrowed money for recurrent expenditure for years and years. It borrowed money to give wage increases; this is crazy. That is why we are in a mess in this state.

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Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Transport.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is why we are in a mess in this state. The Labor Party does not say that the state's economy is in a mess; we say that the state's finances are in a mess. The reason that the finances are in a mess is that there was an incompetent in the Treasurer's job. Now that he is the Leader of the Opposition, he comes in here and cannot make a case. He does not outline what he wants to happen and does not explain what is going to occur. It is rubbish, and that is the disappointing situation.

I want to conclude. All industrial disputes finish—every single one. That is what happens with industrial disputes: they come to a conclusion. The WA Police Union knows that and we know that. I am not critical of the police union. I think it could handle its negotiations better, but that is up to it. The one thing we understand is that when those negotiations conclude and an agreement comes out of them, we have to look back and people will have to look at the performance of the negotiations. Let me make it clear: why are we arguing about \$1.36 for a first-year constable? If I was a first-year constable I would want that agreement done now, because then I would get that money in my pocket rather than leaving it on the table. It is time for this dispute to be concluded. The best way for that to happen is for the police union to accept the \$1 000 wage offer. If there are no cost issues with the scheduling of annual leave and some other matters—if those things can be accommodated—we are happy to do that. If the police union wants to follow through on its 2006 negotiations about the 38-hour week, we are happy with that. If we want to deal with workers' compensation, we can talk to the union about that. But we are not going to pay 6.5 per cent, we are not going to give an effective 5.6 per cent wage rise by simply introducing the 38-hour week and ignoring what happened in the past, and we are not going to give additional increments and those things—not because we do not want to, but because the state of Western Australia does not have the capacity to pay.

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [4.18 pm]: I rise to support this matter of public interest, because every day that our police officers arrive at the police station to log on for work, they put their lives in immediate danger in order to protect us—to protect our community and to keep us safer. Our police officers, like everybody else in our community, recognise that economic times are not as good as they were a few years ago. They recognise that; we all do. The previous government did, which is why it introduced the wages policy of 1.5 per cent increases across the board. The current government recognised that during the election campaign and made what was then an ironclad commitment that it would keep that 1.5 per cent wages policy going forward. The state of the economy was very well known pre-election, as it is now. There are no excuses for this government to come into power and all of a sudden say, "We will renege on the promise that we made during the election campaign. We will renege on the words we used in order to get elected into government now that we are in government." That is what this government has done, and it has done it to our police officers.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, procedural fairness, which union leaders usually cry blue murder about—the union leaders are often on the Labor benches—means that if a policy is introduced, it is introduced prospectively, not for the negotiations that have commenced in good faith and not for negotiations like the police union negotiations with the government that are almost concluded. We have it on good authority that the Department of Commerce made a 1.5 per cent offer around 4 May, well before the government changed its wages policy, which is why the police union wrote to the Premier asking him to confirm that in writing.

I do not know how the mechanics of this government work. I do not know how long it takes the government to reach an agreement from paperwork. I do know that at the same time as our police officers were negotiating in good faith with this government, the firefighters were negotiating in good faith. They are good public servants too; they work hard, and they put their lives in danger. They definitely deserve a fair pay increase. In the current circumstances, the firefighters got it. Despite what the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations told us in question time and earlier in this debate, the firefighters did not get that pay increase before the government's wages policy was changed because the government changed its wages policy on 12 May this year. The agreement lodged in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission between the firefighters and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services makes it very clear that its agreement was signed on 26 May—two whole weeks after the government changed its wages policy. Not only that, but the first couple of pages of that agreement points out that not only did it reach an agreement on 26 May but it further amended the agreement on 8 June, which is why the agreement starts on 9 June, runs for three years and concludes on 9 June 2020. Quite clearly, not only had the agreement not been signed with the United Firefighters Union of WA before the new wages policy came in, but even two weeks after it was signed—two weeks after the wages policy came in—it was amended again a week and a half later. The firefighters got their 1.5 per cent and the police were left out in the cold. What can we surmise from that? Probably a few things. First, as was pointed out by others, the firefighters' union is tied to the union movement that supports the Labor government that has donated very, very heavily and campaigned in favour of this government. Did it get a heads-up? Was it given a better deal? The paperwork shows that the firefighters have

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not been given a better deal. I do not know what happens behind closed doors and I do not know what happens in smoky rooms but the public has every right to question that.

The other thing that we can surmise is that perhaps the Minister for Emergency Services has a bit more sway than the Minister for Police in cabinet. Perhaps it is a combination of both those things. Either way, our police officers have been left out in the cold. They have a legitimate claim to a 1.5 per cent pay increase. The Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations can throw in all sorts of other red herrings. The one I found most interesting is that he came in here today, as a former union leader, and effectively said that in order for the police to get a 38-hour week, they have to give up some entitlements they got decades earlier. Every union leader I have ever known has said that workers should never give up anything they already have. Start with what you have and negotiate from there—that has been the negotiating position of union leaders since time immemorial. But this Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations, a former union leader and former senior union official, has decided that for convenience he will throw out that idea and, in these difficult times, threaten police with a further pay cut if they pursue a legitimate claim to a 38-hour week. That could be a separate issue from the 1.5 per cent pay increase, but the reason a 38-hour week versus a 40-hour week is important in this context has nothing to do with whether the police are awarded a 38-hour week or whether they stay on a 40-hour week. The difference is that by working a 40-hour week, police officers are effectively working 100 hours a year more for the \$1 000 that this government is offering as a maximum pay increase. Therefore, per hour of work, a police officer will get less than any other public servant who works 38 hours a week, because they will be paid \$1 000 extra for 40 hours a week and everyone else will be paid \$1 000 extra for a 38-hour week. That is the lack of fairness over and above the procedural fairness argument with this deal.

I do not have a lot of time and unfortunately I cannot continue to go on about the other reasons that this deal is unfair. I really cannot understand how the Labor government can look police officers in the eye and say, “Thank you for having our back, and we have your back too when it comes to pay increases”, and then come into this place and offer such a measly pay outcome to police officers. If this government genuinely cared about our police officers, the first thing it would do is put a 1.5 per cent pay increase on the table and then worry about the other legitimate claims of police officers and discuss them separately. If the government does not do that, it will continue to show that it holds our police officers, the people who protect us, in total contempt.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.27 pm]: It is very disappointing that the Minister for Police or the Premier did not get up to offer their remarks on this matter of public interest before allowing the opposition to close the matter. However, I will contribute to this debate. I think that the contribution of the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations in this place, with his weasel words and barbed comments about what police officers get, was an absolute disgrace. He is the biggest gift the opposition has received since its drubbing on 11 March. What the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations is fundamentally not getting is that it is irrelevant to talk about policing and what police officers received as part of enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations in 1996 and 2006. What has changed since then? I will tell members what has changed. Our Australian national threat level for terrorist action is now probable, with a special alert for police officers and individuals in our community who wear the uniform to defend our country and our community. They are at higher risk now than they have ever been. They are dealing with the effects of methamphetamine use in the community and the outrageous violence that results from those individuals who are under the influence of that drug. The reason police officers want to keep a 40-hour week is that it gives them better rosters. Who would not want better rosters for police officers, who actually are on duty all the time? Some police officers who have been injured have been injured while they were off duty. That is why police officers get paid for their meal breaks. The Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations seems to think that that is unfair. It is not unfair because police officers often get called out on their meal breaks to intervene in violent disturbances in our community. They are called out to stop high-speed car chases by people who would evade police and to stop those people from terrorising the community on our roads and to make sure that innocent people in our community do not get hurt by the activities of criminals. That is what they do. They work through their lunch break. They work when they are off duty. All they are asking for is the 1.5 per cent pay increase they were promised by that man sitting there, the Premier, during the election campaign. They were told that the Labor Party would meet what the then government was saying. They were told, “We will meet that 1.5 per cent state wages policy, no problem,” and then they came in here, knowing what the books looked like, saying, “Oh no, we’re trashing that commitment, but we’ll keep our commitment for the majority bloc over there in the missos. We’ll keep our commitment to employ additional teachers’ assistants. That commitment we’ll keep, but police officers—you can go and get knotted! We’re not going to keep our commitment to you. We’ll just keep our commitment to the people who control the numbers in the Labor Party.” That is what this is about. I think it is an absolute disgrace. In the eight and a half years we were in government there was not one protest by the police.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park — Treasurer) [4.30 pm]: I rise to make a few comments on this motion. I think the member for Cannington has outlined the case. I will emphasise a few points, but the member for

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Cannington, the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations, outlined the case very, very well. What this is not about is the value that we all hold for police. I do not think there is any doubt around the value that we hold for police, and I want to particularly emphasise the comments made by the Leader of the National Party, because there are parts of Western Australia—particularly where there are multifunction police facilities, for example—where the police are very much the only representatives of government. This is not about value for police; let me make that very clear.

I also want to make very clear the hypocrisy we are hearing from the mob most responsible for the fiscal environment we now face. They sit there —

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: No, you listen. They sit there and say, “Like we did in 2013, like we did in 2008, like we wanted to do in 2005.” As soon as there is the first whiff of grapeshot, they throw money at the problem. That is what they are saying. The Leader of the Opposition for years hocked around a freeze —

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, this is your last chance. You will be going home early. You had the opportunity to speak; now let the Treasurer have his.

Mr B.S. WYATT: The Leader of the Opposition hocked around a wage freeze for the police over the last few years but never managed to get it delivered. He hocked around a freeze that the WA Police Union needed to be aware of. Then, once we announced our new wages policy, he said not only that he was jealous of it, but also that he thought it was excellent. Now, as he thrashes around, looking for a *raison d'être*, he has decided, “Right, this is what I’m in now. I’m going back to throwing money around, the old Treasurer Nahan, not the Institute of Public Affairs Nahan.”

That is the reality. The Leader of the Opposition went on radio on 11 July and said, in respect of the police negotiations, that the former government did not enter into negotiations with police on the enterprise bargaining agreement prior to the election. He said that the former government had learnt its lesson and that over two successive elections it had kept enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations live, but that the unions exploited it and got higher wage increases than they otherwise would have got. He said that as a result, the former government avoided that, and so did the Labor Party. That is right; we did not do what the former government did in 2013. When we came into government this year the process started.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: No, the Leader of the Opposition has not listened to what the member for Cannington said. That is why the police union wrote to us later in May. The Leader of the Opposition said the offer was made on 2 May and we got a letter on, I think, 9 May, saying, “You haven’t made an offer; what is going on?” That completely undermines the Leader of the Opposition’s position. If he is going to now demand spending on every point of controversy, it means he has not learnt his lesson. The Liberal Party is responsible for the greatest fiscal disaster that a government could inherit, and now the Leader of the Opposition is saying, “Throw money at all these issues,” because you know what? That was the form of the former Liberal government, and those days are over, let me tell you.

I am surprised that the shadow Minister for Police now somehow wants the taxpayer to pay twice for the 40-hour week. The taxpayer already paid for that back in 2006 at 5.6 per cent; now the opposition wants the taxpayer to pay again. Is it any wonder that the Liberal Party delivered to the taxpayers, the people of Western Australia, a diabolical set of books?

One final point I want to make is this: not only is it a fact that the Liberal Party does not seem to accept it has a moral obligation for the mess it left behind, particularly the Leader of the Opposition in respect of the books of Western Australia, but also the National Party has spent this apparent billions of dollars thousands of times! So far, it has built from the unilateral amendment to the state agreements act a Japanese-style fast train to Bunbury, payroll tax cuts, now police wage increases, and power bills will not be going up because it is spending on that, and the member for North West Central has cut it from five bucks to three bucks anyway! The opposition has spent that time and again. It has to be called out on that because the reality is, Leader of the National Party, not only has it been spent time and again, but after three years, the money is lost! The one thing that has not yet been dealt with is that after three years, the money is redistributed and we find ourselves facing a Liberal Party saying spend more, throw more money at it because it worked in opposition. At some point the Liberal Party may want to think about its economic credibility. At that point, it will need a hard internal discussion. The Leader of the Opposition, who spent a career talking about small government, came in as Treasurer and ruined the books of this state.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [4.36 pm]: Unfortunately, members opposite are very false friends of police. The Leader of the Opposition is now saying the government should give police

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a 1.5 per cent pay rise when in fact not very long ago he said that he agreed with the government's wages policy. He cannot have it both ways. As the Treasurer pointed out, the former government had an opportunity to enter negotiations before the election, but it did not. It did not for a reason. I certainly acknowledge the hard work that our police officers do. I am disappointed with the state of our finances and that we cannot offer more to our hardworking police officers. As the Minister for Police, though, I am very keen to work on the redress scheme. I am keen to ensure our police officers are properly protected with vests and I am also keen to put a workers' compensation scheme in place. They are all very real things that will make a real difference for police officers in this state. It will also provide, I hope, some comfort to those families who worry about what will happen if the police officer in their family is injured in the workplace. Police have a generous medical scheme but they do not have workers' compensation. That is the priority that I am currently working on. As my colleagues have pointed out, \$1 000 does not make a lot of difference compared with one per cent when looking at the wages of a constable, senior constable or sergeant; it makes a difference at the higher end. Unfortunately, right throughout the Western Australian public service, people are having to show restraint at that higher end. It is unfortunate that we cannot offer police more. I note at the rally today an officer spent a lot of time complaining about the work conditions he faces at his station in the south metro district. I note that he was left with those conditions by the former government.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [4.38 pm]: The government will not be supporting the Liberal Party's motion in this place. In doing so, I want to reiterate, like a range of members have, my respect and regard for police officers across Western Australia. I think it is a pity that because of the financial position bequeathed to us by the Liberal and National Parties we are not able to pay them more. Were the government to accede to the now demands of the opposition—bearing in mind that a month ago it described our policy as excellent and said that it was jealous of our wages policy —

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: People realise the Leader of the Opposition is a chameleon on this issue because he said a month ago that he endorsed the policy. His opportunism is breathtaking. He was the head of the Institute of Public Affairs for 20 or 30 years. He backed our policy a month ago but stood on the steps of Parliament today saying the exact opposite to what he has said for many years. The opportunism and the hypocrisy is breathtaking. Were we to accede to the demands of the opposition on this issue, the entire wages policy of the government would collapse. There would be no wages policy, which would mean more than \$500 million of additional debt. With the luxury of powerlessness, the opposition can say that somehow the government can just make an exception here, but the reality is that an exception in this case would be followed by others. I would love to pay nurses and teachers far more than is provided for in the policy that we have launched. I would love to pay public servants far more than is provided for in the policy, but the reality is that we cannot afford it. The hangover from the Liberal–National government is extraordinary, and everyone across the nation knows it. When I meet with federal government figures, they shake their heads about the conduct of the former government in Western Australia. They shake their heads with shame and embarrassment that the Liberal Party did this to Western Australia. Just to reiterate, the police union wrote to me on 16 May, stating —

We have been waiting for an offer from the government to consider.

That is, no offer was made by the government before 16 May.

Dr M.D. Nahan: They came to me on 9 March.

Mr M. McGOWAN: On 9 March, we were not in office, Leader of the Opposition.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Suspension of Member

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order for the fourth time. As the member has been called to order more than three times, I now suspend the member from the service of the house until the adjournment of today's sitting.

[The Leader of the Opposition left the chamber.]

Debate Resumed

Mr M. McGOWAN: The second point I want to make is about the arrangements for the firefighters.

Mr C.J. Barnett: This is a disappointing moment.

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: Does the member for Cottesloe want to withdraw that remark?

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think it is a disappointing moment, but I will withdraw if it has offended you, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I call the member to order for the second time. I have warned the Leader of the Opposition all afternoon, and he disregarded what I said. If you think you can do a better job, you come up here.

Debate Resumed

Mr S.K. L'Estrange interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the manager of opposition business. Be very careful what you say. If you want to do something, do something about it, but do not just sit there and be smart.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The matters surrounding the firefighters were resolved before the new policy. In relation to the issue that someone raised during question time about rangers, I merely indicated in a meeting to the police union that if an exemption to the wages policy was provided to police officers, other elements of the public sector workforce who are required to work outside of ordinary business hours would request the same exemption. The argument that I somehow equate the role of a police officer to other professions is wrong; it is misleading, and I urge the police union to stop saying it, because other people at the meeting heard what was said.

As I said earlier, the government now faces a \$5.4 billion decline in revenue since the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement*, which everyone will see when the budget is handed down. That is difficult to deal with, but if we follow the opposition's lead, it will be even harder to deal with.

I want to make one final point. During question time I heard one element of the opposition, the National Party, say that the government is in the pocket of big business. Then a moment ago I heard the Liberal Party say that we are in the pocket of unions, even though I had a bunch of union members yelling at me a couple of hours ago. I am confused about the opposition's argument. Somehow I am in the pocket of big business and I am also in the pocket of unions. The government wants to work with everyone across Western Australia, unions and business alike, to create a better investment environment, create jobs, and make sure that Western Australians are well rewarded, as they should be, and at the same time alleviate the huge financial pressure that the Liberals and Nationals put upon the taxpayers of this state.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr P. Katsambanis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr P.J. Rundle
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Mr J.E. McGrath	Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr D.C. Nalder	
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr K. O'Donnell	
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.T. Redman	

Noes (36)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Ms A. Sanderson
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr P. Papalia	Ms J.J. Shaw
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr S.J. Price	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr M.J. Folkard	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr B. Urban
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms E. Hamilton	Mr S.A. Millman	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Ms S.E. Winton
Mr T.J. Healy	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms C.M. Rowe	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr M. Hughes	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)

Question thus negatived.